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ABSTRACT

An overview of business education in four European countries (Italy, Great Britain, France, and West Germany) is presented and the development of business language instruction in Europe is surveyed, with emphasis on the experiences in Great Britain and Denmark. Suggestions are given for future cooperation in business language between the United States and Europe. The development of business language teaching is an international phenomenon, with different countries at different stages of development in this regard. However, the underlying force appears to be the increase in international trade links accentuated by recent economic difficulties. Institutional approaches were found to vary greatly, but the most successful programs integrate language and business components completely, despite the limited business knowledge of language faculty. High quality pedagogical materials appear to be needed, and there seems to be little international cooperation and no forum for exchange concerning business language teaching. (MSE)

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BUSINESS LANGUAGE: PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES IN EUROPE

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BUSINESS LANGUAGE : WHITHER EUROPE ?

The development of business language implies at least two favorable circumstances. First, business education in a given country must be healthy and oriented toward the international. Second, language teachers in the country must be interested in the field of language applied to business. As a result, the goal of this paper is twofold :

1 - to give an overview of business education in four European countries (Italy, Great Britain, France and West Germany), and

2 - to survey the development of business language in Europe with particular emphasis on the cases of Great Britain and Denmark.

The paper will conclude with a number of suggestions for future cooperation in business language between Europe and the United States.

The information concerning business education in Europe is drawn from the January, 1986, Deans and Directors' Meeting held at the C.E.S.A. in Jouy-en-Josas, France. We are indebted to Mr. Jean-Paul Larçon, Director of H.E.C. in Jouy-en-Josas, for his report on the meeting.

AN OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN FOUR COUNTRIES

Business education in Italy is a recent phenomenon, as the first Italian business schools only opened their doors some 15 to 20 years ago. In general, these business schools are non-academic and are largely business-dominated. In fact, the latter situation is the source of a number of problems as the business schools are so dependent on company support that they tend to lose their critical distanciation vis-à-vis the business world. That is, they can no longer give independent advice. Furthermore, the links between companies and business schools tend to lack sophistication as concerns curriculum development, student

selection, financing and development of tailor made programs. Finally, the question of educational standards and quality must be raised as school programs frequently derive directly from company demands. In sum, there seems to be an imbalance in Italy among the three traditional European partners in business education : the business schools, the companies, and the government.

In Great Britain, there has been considerable interest recently in government circles in possible company-business school links. This interest has led to a number of reports, such as the 1983 report of the Advisory Council on Management Education. On the other hand, government financing in the United Kingdom has been reduced due to budgetary restrictions. The results of these restrictions have not been universally negative as the business schools have been forced to define their strategies more precisely as a consequence. However, the business schools have also been increasingly forced to sell to business and thus to emphasize the short-term.

Generally, in Great Britain, there is a certain homogeneity of the M.B.A. degree. At the same time, there is a university - polytechnic split similar to that which exists in Germany. It should also be noted that the demand for management education in the U.K. is quite strong and in fact, for the moment has not been met. Is the solution privatization ? decentralization ? restructuring ? Certainly two fundamental issues are the schools' remaining autonomous and the shortage of qualified professors. The second question is common to several countries and involves adequate pay for the teaching jobs offered.

In France, although management institutions have traditional financial links to companies, the latter have not really understood how expensive management education is. Furthermore, the dialogue between companies and business schools should include a discussion of strategic goals.

As concerns the teaching load, some fifty per cent is done by the staff and another fifty per cent by company executives. This arrangement has the advantage of providing in-put from the companies. On the other hand, all too often it is their personal ideas the executives share with students, rather than their corporate culture. One final remark concerning the relations between companies and business schools in France is that there is a pressing need for French businesses to support research in the schools.

Turning to Germany, we find the split, mentioned earlier in the British context, between the Fachhochschule on the one hand and the universities on the other

hand. Put in very broad terms, the former are close to the companies but have an image problem while the latter have a good image but are far from the companies. In fact, the real question in Germany seems to be : When will real management education begin ? For the moment, most training actually takes place within the companies themselves.

COMMON EUROPEAN PROBLEMS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

After this very rapid overview of management education in four countries, it is certainly interesting to take a look at the themes which seem to have a continent-wide, European dimension. The first of these general themes is the links between companies and business schools which are almost universally difficult. The problems stem in part from the cultural differences inherent in the two types of institutions. One possible way to ease these discrepancies in culture would be for professors to spend extended periods of time as managers with companies or, conversely, for managers to work as professors for long periods. A second source of friction between business schools and business is the latter's strong demand for programs tailor-made to meet its specific needs. Obviously, such tailor-made programs place greater strains on schools' faculty and finances than do inter-company programs.

A second European concern is for sheer size and excellence among Europe's business schools. Indeed, in contrast to American standards, a large European school would have perhaps 100 faculty members. Thus, no country, much less any given institution, possesses the financial and intellectual wherewithal to develop the European Technological Institute modeled on M.I.T. which has been suggested by some multinational company presidents. In other words, to attain the critical mass necessary for such undertakings, European institutions must learn to work together.

Taken from the human resource management perspective of Jean-Paul Larçon, the fundamental unity of the European management training market also implies a policy of segmentation for business schools. At present, everyone wants to train top management - in reality a very small market segment. A more enlightened approach would seem to be institutional specializing in currently undeveloped fields such as advertising, or pricing and taxes in the different countries of Europe, or foreign languages for sales personnel. Yet another area of

specialization might be leadership and motivation as a function of language and culture.

Indeed, another current problem of European business education is the lack of time to develop technical skills and particularly language skills. It has been demonstrated that students hired by large companies in Europe must be highly adaptable and thus must possess a variety of skills and a number of languages. Cross-cultural sensitivity is essential.

However, on the subject of language there is disagreement on the choice and the number. In major French institutions, English plus one other mandatory foreign language is the current position, but there is a strong push at present toward a third compulsory language. In Britain, bringing in a single foreign language was something of a struggle and is still not universally accepted. Furthermore, geographically speaking, should the business student in Strasbourg learn the same language(s) as his colleague in Nice ? Moreover, given the time constraints of business education, even in Europe, language studies are directly dependent on the linguistic foundations acquired in secondary school. So, what can be done ? Certainly student exchanges among European countries should be increased. Real internationalizing of business subjects should be undertaken and even library holdings in foreign languages other than English should be vastly increased.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS LANGUAGE IN EUROPE

These last remarks bring us to the second of our two themes, the development of business language in Europe. In Europe, with the tightening of commercial ties among member nations of the European Economic Community, an ever clearer demand has been heard for professionals trained in language and management to be the top and mid-level executives of tomorrow. A few countries, like Britain and France, anticipated this development fifteen or more years ago and made language study one of the cornerstones of management education. Other nations, in particular Denmark, have been caught up in the business-language maelstrom fairly recently. Still others, Spain for example, seem to be largely untouched by the development of the business language phenomenon, but with the inclusion of Spain and Portugal in the E.E.C. (January 1st, 1986), this attitude among Iberian business schools will undoubtedly change.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON LANGUAGE AND INTERNATIONALIZING BUSINESS STUDIES

Perceiving a similar trend - at different speeds - in Europe and North America, the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Lyon (France) undertook to organize the First International Colloquium on Language and Internationalizing Business Studies on its campus on July 5th and 6th, 1985. The thought behind the colloquium was to bring together colleagues on either side of the Atlantic on the one hand, and to mix business professors and business language professors on the other hand. The colloquium was to be an exercise in academic oecumenicism.

Since the colloquium was an open affair based on a public call for papers in Europe and North America, the attendance statistics are in themselves something of a thermometer for international interest in the gathering's theme. Three national groups were particularly numerous : the French, the Americans, and the British. If the first two were anticipated - the French due to simple proximity and the Americans thanks to considerable national interest in the subject (as well as the attraction of a cheap holiday in France, given the inflated exchange rate of the dollar), the size of the British contingent was not expected. As will become clear from later discussion, the number of British participants reflected a sea change toward applied language instruction in Great Britain. The overall colloquium attendance of 125 emphasized the high level of interest in international affairs on both continents. In addition to these three countries, seven others (Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Ireland, Spain, and Austria) were also represented. The desired business-language mix was attained as two-thirds of the participants were from the field of language and one-third from business schools. The sex balance was about 60 % /men/ to 40 % /women/. As was brought out during the colloquium, only two of the plenary session speakers were women (15 %), while women represented about thirty-five per cent of all speakers. In general, women tended to be less well represented at the higher administrative levels and still less in business than in language.

"CASE STUDIES" OF THE STATUS OF BUSINESS LANGUAGE IN THREE COUNTRIES

Among the papers given during the two days of the colloquium, three dealt with the current degree of advancement of business language in three countries : the United States (Judy Frommer : Harvard University), Great Britain (Angela

Chambers : University of Ulster), and Denmark (Jacques Qvistgaarde : Copenhagen Graduate School of Business).

The case of the United States

For her overview of business French in the United States, Judith Frommer used a questionnaire mailed to some 300 four-year institutions as well as information gleaned from "French for Business and International Trade" (David O'Connell editor, University of Illinois at Chicago) as a base. Although the results of the study cannot be considered definitive, given the near impossibility of targeting all university-level institutions possessing business language courses, Dr. Frommer has nonetheless listed 108 business French courses in the U.S.. The courses identified seem to have no geographical bias, but rather are spread over forty states and the District of Columbia. However, such courses appear to be more prevalent on the campuses of large, generally state-supported institutions rather than small colleges. Interestingly, Dr. Frommer has found that the majority of these courses originated within the language department and that only a few (17) are offered jointly with an economics department or business school. On the other hand, the joint courses are precisely the ones which attract the largest numbers of students. It is Dr. Frommer's opinion that the future of the already firmly established field of business French lies in coordinated programs such as these.

The case of Great Britain

It is precisely on this point that Dr. Frommer's presentation of the American situation corresponded most closely to that of Great Britain given by Angela Chambers. In fact, Dr. Chambers structured her presentation of the some 50 university-level programs in combined language and business currently available in the United Kingdom according to the degree of "integration" of the language and business components.

The British case seems rather similar to that of the United States, since language departments initially dealt only in literature and had no links to business schools. However, since 1960, there has been an ever stronger movement toward combining language and business, led at first by the "Colleges of Advanced Technology" (which had recently become universities - Bradford, Salford, Strathclyde, etc ...) and thereafter, by the Polytechnics. These institutions'

success in attracting students to their new programs prompted the universities - primarily the "redbrick" universities - to found similar courses of study. In sum, the development of combined business and language programs progressively expanded to the present large number.

As concerns the integration of the business and language elements, there seem to be five levels of meshing. At the lowest level, business students are offered optional language courses on many campuses. Under this sort of arrangement, the language and business curricula remain entirely separate, and the hapless student must combine them as best he can. At a second, more complex level, two disciplines may be combined in a degree course - for example, language and business at the University of Edinburgh, or language with management or marketing at Leeds and Lancaster. Still the language portions are taught within the school of humanities and may or may not be oriented toward business. At a third level of sophistication, the two disciplines are combined and the language teaching is devoted solely to business language. However, in the institutions concerned (eg Salford), the burden of integrating the two disciplines lies entirely with the language department. The business courses remain the same whether a language component is involved or not.

A step further along the road to meshing the two elements is the "Single Honours in International Business and Modern Languages" at the University of Aston (Birmingham). At Aston, some business courses are taught directly in the target language (French or German). In addition, all students spend a year in a French or German business school and do a traineeship with a company in one of the two countries. Finally, at the fifth and highest level of integration, students on three sister campuses in Britain, France and Germany work toward the same diploma in European Business sponsored by the European Community. The organization includes language courses carefully geared to the business curriculum, a mandatory period of studies on one of the sister campuses and the awarding of two diplomas - from the home and the sister institutions. Professors of language and business closely coordinate their courses at all levels. An example of this last category would be Middlesex Polytechnic with the ESCAE de Reims and Fachhochschule Reutlingen.

It is tempting for an American to see in the British example a blue-print for the future of business language in the United States. After all, the British university system is not that different from the American one and the British have the same reputation as the Americans for being weak in languages. Certainly, given that they began tinkering with business and language programs in the

early 1960s, the Britons have been working in the field for much longer than anyone in the U.S.. Thus, Americans should be able to profit from their experience. However, there are a few fundamental differences between the two countries' situations we must not overlook.

- First, conditions were particularly favorable for the spread of applied language in the early 1960s as the Colleges of Advanced Technology, whose language departments had no long-standing, profound attachment to the sole teaching of literature, were just becoming universities in their own right. Furthermore, in the late 1960s, the Polytechnics - whose vocation was also primarily technical - perceived the interest of joining forces with the Business Studies sections. In other words, the institutions which founded the business language movement in Great Britain had no entrenched interest in teaching only literature and also enjoyed university-level status.

- Second, Britain's main trading partners are either English-speaking or are situated just across the Channel from her - hence the overwhelming concentration on French and German in the combined language - business programs. Certainly, limiting the number of languages offered has enabled Britain to make great strides toward integrating them with the business subjects. (However, the choice of languages must be seen as somewhat arbitrary. Italy is among Britain's primary trading partners too, yet only three programs of business and Italian exist in the entire United Kingdom). If the principle of concentration is to be applied to the United States, which languages should be chosen for study and on what criteria should the choice be based ? Should university language sections in collaboration with their business schools select one or several regions (and thus languages) of the world which would become their specialities - a sort of area studies approach ?

- Third, and most important, Great Britain is a member of a relatively tight-knit multilingual economic federation, the E.E.C., and thus is involved in daily business - and politics - with non-English-speaking partners. The United States is never likely to be involved in such a close economic working relationship with other nations.

The case of Denmark

At first blush, the example of Denmark - a small country on the periphery of Europe - might seem of marginal interest. Yet, the recent evolution of language

teaching in Denmark is strikingly similar to that of the United States. Until the beginning of the present decade, language teaching in the university economics sections and business schools (which are separate institutions) was limited to a single language - English - then considered to be the key to international trade. However, the economic crisis of the 1970s, which struck Denmark particularly hard, led large numbers of students to leave the humanities to study economics and business - a development not unknown in the United States. Given the circumstances, language teachers were looking for new solutions to fill their now empty classes. Thereupon, the Danish government intervened through the report of the High Council on University Education (June, 1981), to mandate the creation of international programs designed to facilitate Denmark's penetration of foreign markets. As a direct result, new courses of study were instituted in the country's universities and business schools. These new programs incorporated both linguistic elements (primarily English, French, and German) and comparative country analyses (demography, balance of payments, manpower pool, etc ...). According to Dr. Qvistgaarde, the institutions offering both language and business/economics include the business schools of Arhus and Copenhagen and the university of Odense. In addition, the universities of Roskilde, Albord, Arhus, and Odense (in a separate program) offer international business courses without a language component. The University of Copenhagen is currently studying the type of international program it will propose. In sum, Denmark has only recently begun working in the area of business language. However, thanks to the encouragement of the Danish government, the structures for international business programs with a lanugage component are already in place and have begun functionning.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the papers given during the colloquium on language and internationalizing business studies, as well as the formal and informal discussion, a number of observations were made and conclusions drawn. In particular, the following points were observed :

1. The development of business language teaching is a truly international phenomenon.

2. Inevitably, certain countries have had more experience in the field (eg Britain and France) than others, while still other nations (eg Spain) have barely begun working along these lines.

3. The underlying driving force behind the business language phenonomen in all countries concerned seems to be the increase in trade links among nations, accentuated by recent economic difficulties.

4. The approaches to teaching business language vary not only from country to country but also from campus to campus.

5. Broadly speaking, those business language programs are most successful which most completely integrate the business and language components, that is, where the business and language faculty cooperate closely. (A variant of this remark is the call by Jean-Paul Larçon, Director of H.E.C. near Paris, for language faculty trained in business or vice-versa).

6. In relation to point five, few language faculty possess the business knowledge necessary to feel at ease in a business language classroom.

7. There is a generally felt need for high-quality pedagogical materials (texts, audio-visuals, etc ...) for teaching business language.

8. There is little national, much less international, cooperation in the development of programs or materials. Indeed, no country seems to possess a functioning network of business language teachers, although there are recent associations such as that founded by Claude LeGoff for business French in the United States.

9. Prior to the Lyon colloquium, there had never been an international forum for the exchange of ideas on business language.

In view of the preceding observations, the following suggestions seem appropriate :

1. That a colloquium on business language and internationalizing be maintained on a bi-annual basis as a forum for sharing thought in the field. (Lyon would welcome proposals to hold the colloquium on other campuses).

2. That the theme of the 1987 Lyon colloquium be "Creating Pedagogical Materials for International Business and Business Language".

3. That a group of business language teachers interested in the creation of pedagogical materials be formed. (The idea here is to create materials in France or Germany, that correspond to the actual classroom needs of business French or German teachers in the United States, for example). Interested parties in all business languages are invited to write the author.

4. That an international network of business language teachers be formed to share ideas and resources. To this end, the names of participants at the first Lyon colloquium could constitute an initial list, in conjunction with different national lists or associations.

5. That exchanges of student internships between institutions offering business and language studies be encouraged. To this effect, the network of colleaques described in number 4 would seem particularly useful.

6. That language faculty internships with companies abroad be sought, perhaps on an exchange basis. Although vastly more difficult to arrange than student internships, this sort of faculty enrichment opportunity with a foreign company would be extremely useful. Again, the international network of business language colleagues might be a source of contacts.

7. That more language faculty be given the opportunity to attend the retraining seminars in business language now available (in French in Paris, Vichy and Lyon ; in German in Cologne) and that such seminars also be offered in the different regions of the United States. Within the U.S., one likely solution would be for regional universities with particular expertise in the field to hold seminars on their campuses, preferably with the aid of experts from the target country.

8. That, whenever possible, business language programs be established in collaboration with the business school of the campus involved. (To this end, the very existence of numerous joint business - language programs abroad may prove a powerful argument).

9. That language faculty make themselves aware of international business seminars for students or businessmen available abroad - even when given in English. International business is inextricably linked to business language.

Thus, an English-language seminar on the economy of a given country can easily be a first step toward the founding of a course on the business language of that country. Once again, the links to the language faculty of business schools abroad can be a valuable source of information.

10. That, beyond preparing their students in business language and helping them seek an internship abroad, business language faculty bear in mind the possibility for the better students to do graduate business studies abroad. Consortia such as the C.I.A.M. in France (member schools : H.E.C., ESC-Lyon, ESC-Paris, CERAM-Nice), actively recruit foreign students possessing a basic grasp of business and a good working knowledge of the national language to work toward the French equivalent of an M.B.A..

11. That, preferably in cooperation with the business faculty, language faculty help raise local awareness of the international dimension of business, through invitations to representatives of selected cities' chambers of commerce or of foreign business schools to speak to civic groups. Such representatives are often willing to address Rotary, Lions Clubs, etc ... during visits to the U.S..

12. And, most importantly, that faculty trained in literature not lose hope before the challenge of teaching business language. If the effort required is considerable, so is the reward of bringing more students to know the language and culture of the country with which they feel an affinity. Le jeu en vaut bien la chandelle.

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2 - Much of the information on business language in Europe is drawn from the author's article, "Hand Across the Water".